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Garscube Landscape Link Underpass Project

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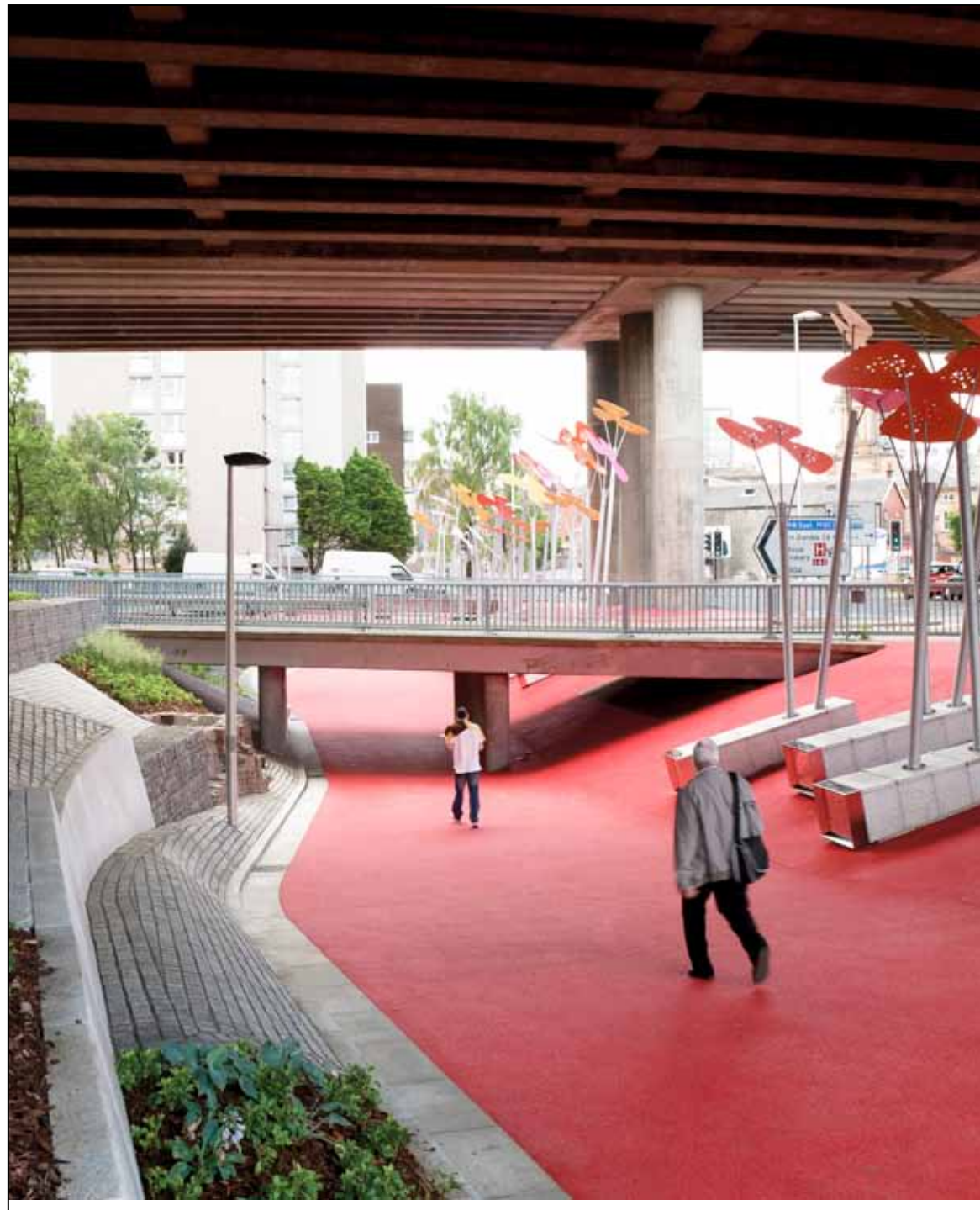
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The Landscape Link is the first completed phase of the Speirs Lock regeneration initiative instigated by the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership (GCRP), a partnership between Glasgow City Council and ISIS Waterside Regeneration, supported by British Waterways Scotland. The project brief called for the radical revitalization of this crucial connection between the canal network and Glasgow City Centre transforming it from an inhospitable environment to one which embraced pedestrians and cyclists in a creative and cost effective manner.

project introduction

Project Description

Chris Rankin and Kenny Fraser are Founding Partner's at Rankin Fraser Landscape Architecture and designed the Garscube Landscape Link in Glasgow in collaboration with Ewan Anderson and Lisa Findlay of 7N Architects. Fraser and Rankin's role encompassed all aspects from initial concept development, through sketch design stage to construction on-site. Areas of specific research unique to the project included the psychology of use of urban open space, planting irrigation and site specific lighting design.

The existing M8 underpass connecting the city centre to Garscube Road and the Speirs Locks area had been described as an 'unbelievably hostile environment'. It acted as a link but was perceived as a physical and psychological barrier by people and for regeneration. Dramatically improving this severed connection to the city centre and healing the 'scar' of the M8 motorway is at the heart of the significance and originality of this design. The project's importance has been recognised with various national award wins including being awarded a Special Mention Award at the RIAS (Royal Incorporation of Architects Scotland) Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland Awards 2011 (Judges; Professor Andy MacMillan OBE FRIAS (Chair), Sholto Humphries President RIAS and Architect David Mackay Hon FRIAS where the citation states, 'this highly unusual work of architecture enlivens a previously unpleasant public space and infuses it with joy.' Other awards for the project include; the Scottish Design Awards 2010; Future Building Category – Winner, the Roses Design Awards 2010; Placemaking/ Landscaping – Gold Award Winner, BALI (British Association of Landscape Industries) Principal Winner, Hard Landscaping Construction, Cost between £300,000 - £1,500,000 2011 and Principal Winner for Best Innovation/ Technology used in a Landscape Scheme 2011. The judges citation states; 'Gabions containing porphyry have been used to excellent effect and crushed stone from site re-used wherever possible. A large stone outcrop has been integrated into the scheme, which is softened by creative planting. The imaginative and clever use of a range of landscape techniques has delivered an absolutely stunning piece of sculptural engineering.' Other discernible project impact includes being selected by RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) as a Case Study for the RIBA Sustainability Hub Website. The Sustainability Hub is a publicly accessible web site which disseminates information on sustainability to professionals, educators and students. The project has been selected for publication in both books and journals. It was recently published in the book, 1000 Tips by 100 Landscape Architects, published by Loft Publications, a Barcelona based Publishing House. It was also selected for publication in two prominent European Landscape Architecture and Architecture Journals; Paisea; revista de paisajismo (Spain), No. 16 'Scars', March 2011 and architektura I biznes (Poland) 5/2011 where it was selected for the front cover. It was also published in the UK journal Green Places, Issue No 68, October 2010. It was selected for the Annual Exhibition at The Royal Scottish Academy in 2009 and was part of the Architecture + Design Scotland organised RIAS Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland Exhibition at The Lighthouse from 30/11/11 until 09/01/12 and subsequently touring. The project has been widely published on Architecture websites and Blogs including Landezine; www.landezine.com
<http://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/2010/07/18/garscube-link-7n-architects-rankinfraser/>
http://www.urbanrealm.co.uk/news/2480/Phoenix_Flowers_bed_down_at_Garscube_Link.html
<http://www.contemporist.com/2010/07/16/phoenix-flowers-by-rankinfraser-and-7n-architects/>
<http://www.archdaily.com/69178/garscube-landscae-link-7n-architects-rankinfraser-landscape-architecture/>
<http://www.mimoa.eu/projects/United%20Kingdom/Glasgow/Garscube%20Link>
<http://www.fastcodesign.com/1661922/how-to-revitalize-a-highway-underpass-hint-turn-it-into-munchkinland>

We have also recently been invited to enter the 2012 European Prize for Urban Public Space (www.publicspace.org <<http://www.publicspace.org>>). This award is a biennial initiative of the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (www.cccb.org <<http://www.cccb.org>>) and is currently co-organised by the Architektur Zentrum Wien (Vienna), The Architecture Foundation (London), the Museum of Finnish Architecture (Helsinki), the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (Paris), the Nederlands Architectuurinstituut (Rotterdam), and the Deutsches Architekturmuseum (Frankfurt).). The Prize, created in 2000, aims to recognise and promote the creation and improvement of public space, which is understood as a clear indicator of the civic and collective health. Created in 2000, it has thus become a window on to the transformation of public spaces in Europe and a gauge of the main concerns of European cities. The majority of projects that have been presented are conserved today in the European Prize of Urban Public Space.

The invite states, 'Following the recommendation of a member of our Board of Experts I'm writing to invite you to submit your work "Garscube Link" to the 2012 European Prize for Urban Public Space.'

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project introduction

Project Description cont...

The project was initiated in 2008 and was completed in 2010.

The Landscape Link is the first completed phase of the Speirs Lock regeneration initiative instigated by the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership (GCRP), a partnership between Glasgow City Council and ISIS Waterside Regeneration, supported by British Waterways Scotland.

The project brief called for the radical revitalization of this crucial connection between the canal network and Glasgow City Centre transforming it from an inhospitable environment to one which embraced pedestrians and cyclists in a creative and cost effective manner. Speirs Locks and the canal network had been severed from the city centre by the construction of the M8 motorway in the 1960's. This inner city motorway was routed to run through 29 planned Comprehensive Development Areas centered on areas of tenemental slum clearance including the Speirs Locks/ Garscube Landscape Link site in Cowcaddens and Woodside. The increasing obsolescence of the Forth and Clyde Canal and the construction of the motorway accelerated the decline of the once thriving trading centre of Speirs Locks. The GCRP called for the Landscape Link to signal the wider transformation of the Speirs Locks area which had degenerated to comprise 14 hectares of low grade industrial and derelict land, by establishing an exciting and welcoming entry point which would help to unlock the development opportunities immediately to the north of the M8.

The existing M8 underpass connecting the city centre to Garscube Road and the Speirs Locks area had been described as an 'unbelievably hostile environment'. It acted as a link but was perceived as a physical and psychological barrier by people and for regeneration. Improving the severed connections to the city centre and healing the 'scar' of the M8, the Landscape Link is the first in a series of public realm initiatives that are being implemented as part of the wider regeneration strategy for the area,

Prior to the construction of the motorway the site had been a small neighborhood park; Phoenix Park and its memory conceptually drives the design of the space. The design has widened the underpass considerably, transforming the previously dark and intimidating environment into a flowing and unifying red resin bonded surface that doesn't constrain those using it to a single, confrontational, route. The surface also unifies the two sides of the space which were given different treatments according to their location. The surface 'wraps' up the west side and is illuminated by a ribbon of 50 coloured aluminium "flowers" which draw the visitor through the space. The 'flowers' are designed in deliberate contrast to the solidity of the concrete motorway structure. Fluttering up to 8m in the air, they draw the visitor through the space evoking the memory of the previous park. The flowers are a necessarily loud intervention which competes with the scale and visual cacophony of the flyover environment. The east side of the space consists of a more contextually driven and humanizing series of planted terraces formed by gabion baskets and stone reclaimed from the site demolition works which are partly clad in corten steel. Areas of the uncovered bed rock were revealed and are incorporated and a rain water collection system feeds water to the plants shaded by the overhead carriageways. The new public space grabs territory back for pedestrians and cyclists and has become a place where people linger rather than pass through.

The project emerged out of our earlier Speirs Locks Masterplan and is intended to support the aspirations inherent in this study. A key requirement of the masterplan was that it should act as a catalyst for the economic and social regeneration of the 14 hectare site and re-establish the area as a landmark location and future destination, thus allowing this once thriving but now anonymous place to be re-discovered. The Garscube Landscape Link has been so successful in changing perceptions that The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) and the National Theatre for Scotland have joined Scottish Opera as occupants of the Speirs Locks site.

The project budget was £1.5 million. It was delivered on time and on budget in early summer 2010 to an extremely high standard of design and construction execution. It is innovative, unashamedly contemporary and contextual. It is a landmark. This place where people once rushed through is now a place to linger, sit and have lunch.

The sustainable principles which underpin the project have been recognized at a national level by the Scottish Government who chose Speirs Locks as one of eleven Scottish Sustainable Community Initiative projects from a long list of 68.

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project introduction

Project Description cont...

The project's significance to The Client, the profession of Landscape Architecture, the public and the environment can be explained as follows; The project is the first completed phase of the Speirs Lock regeneration initiative instigated by the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership (GCRP), a partnership between Glasgow City Council and ISIS Waterside Regeneration, supported by British Waterways Scotland. The project's significance can be measured in the impact it has had on the wider Speirs Locks Masterplan area with nationally important arts organizations moving onto the Speirs Locks masterplan site. In terms of the public and the environment; it heals an infrastructural scar created by the construction of the M8. It exemplifies sustainability in the truest sense, it has a powerful and poetic concept which harks back to the memory of the site prior to the motorway's construction but is unashamedly contemporary. It was delivered to a tight budget, on time and to an extremely high standard of design and construction execution and was designed with robustness and a sensible maintenance commitment in mind.

The scheme is both unique and special in that it creates a place from a non place. A place between, where previously one rushed through, becomes a place of destination and somewhere to linger. It indicates how a landscape led scheme can deliver true social and economic benefits for the wider community as evidenced by both the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) and the National Theatre for Scotland moving onto the Speirs Locks site. It indicates how Landscape Architects can deliver value from the most exceptionally hostile contexts and heals the scar in the urban fabric created by the M8. Two further demanding problems which were solved was the 'Phoenix Flowers' lighting solution, a deliberately 'loud' intervention which competes with the scale and visual cacophony of the flyover environment while a rain water collection system feeds water to the plants shaded by the overhead carriageways of the motorway.

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